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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LJUBLJANA 000063

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SI](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVENIA'S DIVERGENT VIEWS ON NATO/EU COOPERATION
VS. COMPETITION MIRROR PARTY CLEAVAGES

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Classified By: Ambassador Thomas B. Robertson for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. The public debate in Slovenia over the government's January 12 decision to send four trainers to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I) has led to the crystallization of two distinct views on the relationship between NATO and EU security policy. The first sees NATO as a critical institution for European security and sees Slovenia's role within NATO and the EU as complementary. The second sees the EU as a counterweight to American power and advocates strengthening an autonomous European security policy to diminish U.S. influence in Europe. This strategic-conceptual faultline corresponds closely with the political cleavage between the center-right government(espousing the former view) and the center-left opposition (espousing the latter). END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Immediately after the GOS's January 12 announcement that it would send four soldiers to Iraq as part of NTM-I, a vigorous debate ensued in the press, on the airwaves, and in coffee shops and internet chatrooms around the country. Proponents and opponents of the government's decision made their case using a variety of arguments, but in the sea of articles, op-eds, talk shows, and blogs devoted to the subject, two general attitudes have emerged on Slovenia's relationship to NATO and the EU. The first, espoused most clearly by the Jansa government and members of Slovenia's security and defense establishment, views NATO as the world's pre-eminent security institution and seeks to address common threats through the complementary use of NATO and EU resources. The second attitude, articulated most clearly by members of the center-left opposition as well as by a majority of academics and media commentators, views the U.S. as a hegemonic -- if not neo-imperialist -- power, which ought to be held in check by a more "multilateral" European security policy.

[1](#)3. (U) An opinion poll published January 28 showed that 35.7 percent of Slovenes support the government's decision to send military instructors to Iraq, while 56.6 percent are opposed. When the general sample is subdivided by party affiliation, however, a dramatic cleavage emerges. While 73.4 percent of the supporters of the center-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) approved of the government's decision, 78.9 percent of the supporters of the center-left Liberal Democratic Party (LDS) opposed it.

Center-Left Accuses GOS of "Succumbing" to U.S. Pressure

¶4. (SBU) Among the most vociferous opponents of the GOS's decision to send soldiers to Iraq is former PM Anton (Tone) Rop, head of the LDS parliamentary deputies group. (NOTE: While Rop is head of the LDS parliamentary deputies group, Jelko Kacin is the head of the party. END NOTE.) Rop immediately lambasted the decision after it was announced, saying that "Prime Minister Janez Jansa, who has caved in to outside pressure, will have to accept the political responsibility for this nonchalant decision. This U-turn in Slovenian foreign policy is thoughtless and harmful." On January 19, appearing on the political talk show "Trenja" on private broadcaster POP TV, Rop further insinuated that the GOS had caved in to U.S. pressure and somewhat hysterically called for Slovenian citizens to take to the streets in protest. Speaking of his own government, Rop noted that "we emphasized other policies, let us say the policies of France and Germany."

¶5. (U) The LDS website (www.lds.si) quotes Rop at length on the subject of sending troops to Iraq: "We (the previous government) made the political decision that Slovenia would not send troops to Iraq. We stuck with it. The current government is the one that is sending soldiers to Iraq; it is the one that is exposing Slovenia. With this we are paying the price of the SDS's electoral campaign. The fact that Slovenia is finally sending soldiers to Iraq is the success of the U.S. Ambassador in Slovenia." In a January 13 interview for the print daily "Vecer," Rop also indicated that although sending the four instructors was only a "symbolic action," it nevertheless represents a "departure

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from European policy."

¶6. (SBU) Remarkably, during a January 17 meeting of the parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee, LDS tabled a proposal to ask the government to disclose all "relevant activities" of ambassadors of NATO states to Slovenia that could have impacted the government's decision.

Jansa Government Stresses NATO/EU Complementarity

¶7. (U) Having justified its original decision of sending trainers to Iraq by stressing Slovenia's commitments to the UN, NATO, and the Iraqi government, the GOS pointedly countered the opposition's arguments (outlined above) by trying to prove that the decision to send trainers to NTM-I was not in contradiction with EU policy, but rather that it was complementary. The MFA took the rather unusual step of publishing a statement on its website (www.gov.si/mzz) responding to Rop's arguments in his January 13 interview with "Vecer." The statement begins as follows: "The Government of the Republic of Slovenia is not departing from European policy with respect to Iraq; rather, it is supporting and helping realize European policy." The statement goes on to cite various UNSC resolutions calling for the stabilization of conditions in Iraq as well as Interim Iraqi President Allawi's request to NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer for NATO's help in providing technical support and training for the Iraqi Security Forces. The statement goes on to say "The decision of the Slovenian government to deploy four members of the Slovenian Armed Forces to the NATO Mission in Iraq is in accordance with the direction and decisions of the European Union to continuously support the efforts of the Iraqis to reconstruct and contribute to the democratic development of Iraq."

¶8. (U) In numerous television appearances, both Prime Minister Jansa and Defense Minister Erjavec have repeatedly stressed the fact that NATO and EU policy are complementary

and that both support Iraq's democratic development. The PM and other government representatives have also debunked the idea that NATO's contributions to Euro-Atlantic security are in any way contrary to the interests and policies of the EU.

Comment

¶9. (C) Though it is a small country, Slovenia is by no means a monolithic whole. The difference in perspective, attitude, and opinion between the inheritors of the socialist legacy on the left, and the former dissidents now in power on the right, is profound. In security policy, economic policy, and in terms of their general attitude towards the U.S., the two camps have divergent positions. The debate over sending soldiers to NTM-I has cast these differences in stark relief, especially with regards to the debate over NATO/EU primacy in the security arena. In arguing that there is a conflict between EU and NATO security interests, Rop and other members of the center-left opposition have shown their true colors. The GOS has calmly and forcefully rebutted these arguments, arguing that Slovenia's security is inextricably tied to its NATO membership, and that its commitments to NATO and European security are complementary, rather than conflictual. Slovenia's participation in NATO missions (ISAF, KFOR, and now NTM-I) and EU missions (Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina) proves this point.

¶10. (C) The fact that Slovenia's "chattering classes" often line up with the opposition should not bias the USG view of Slovenia's commitment as a partner and Ally. The Jansa government has taken considerable heat from the opposition for its "pro-U.S." policies. Despite this, Jansa has remained resolute and has managed to maintain a high personal popularity rating. Demonstrating statesmanlike conduct throughout this oftentimes volatile debate, we see Jansa as a reliable partner in the future and a lasting presence on the Slovenian political scene.
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